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CONVERSION.

"Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—  
EZEKIEL xxxiii., 11.

THIS should be regarded as the language, not so much of imperative command, as of earnest exhortation—of entreaty. The great God of heaven and earth, notwithstanding the many provocations which he had received from his ungrateful people, and when he might in full justice destroy them, condescends to come down and plead with them. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*"

In the text, God sets forth and urges the performance of a duty. It is that of *turning from our evil ways*; or (which is the same) of *conversion*.

In the following discourse, I propose,

I. To explain the nature of conversion. And,

II. To urge the importance of it.

It is necessary to explain the nature of conversion, because the subject is commonly misunderstood, especially by the unconverted. Such persons have no experimental knowledge of conversion, and in general no proper conceptions of it. They imagine it to be something which it is not, and are often looking and striving after a change which, if accomplished, would not be conversion, and might not do them any good.

Conversion, then, is not a change in the *nature*, the *substance*, or in any of the *faculties* of the soul. We need no such change as this. We have no reason to expect any such change. And such a change, if accomplished, would not be conversion. It might not be to us of any benefit. We might be transformed into some other kind of creatures, but whether for the better or the worse, would remain to be seen afterwards.

Nor is conversion a change of any kind, in which the subject is *pas-*

sive, and for which he can do nothing but *wait*. Most unconverted persons seem to regard the change in question, in this light. They have no definite ideas as to the nature of conversion; but presume it is something in reference to which they have nothing to do, and for which they can do nothing but submissively to wait, till the work is accomplished in them by some foreign power. Now there can hardly be a greater mistake, or one of more disastrous influence, in regard to the nature of conversion, than this. The effect of such an impression can only be to excuse and quiet the soul in sin, and defer the great and needed change, without which we perish.

Conversion is set forth in the scriptures as a change in which the subject is *active*, and not passive; a change which he is instrumentally and actively to accomplish, and not one for which he is quietly to wait. So it is represented in the text. "*Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways;*" implying that there is a *duty to be performed*—a *turning*, in which we are to be free and active.

When I speak of conversion as a change in which the subject of it is free and active, let it not be inferred that I exclude the special operations of the Holy Spirit in this work. So far from excluding these operations, I regard them as of indispensable necessity. But necessary for what? Not to transform a passive subject into some other kind of being or thing, but to "*work in us to will and to do,*" while we *actively will and do*—to excite within us holy affections, while we *actively put forth such affections*. And the fact that the Holy Spirit is needed and is given for this important purpose, should not be perverted by us into an excuse for continued impenitence, under the miserable pretence of waiting for the Spirit, but should be an encouragement to us to immediate and vigorous action. We have the satisfaction of knowing that we do not undertake this great work alone. We have the Holy Spirit to work in us, and assist us. And the Spirit will never be wanting to us, unless we are wanting to ourselves.

The part of the Spirit, as I said, is to "*work in us to will and to do,*" while we *actively will and do*—to excite within us holy affections, while we *actively put forth such affections*. And this brings us to the very *nature* of conversion,—a change in our *internal exercises and affections*, from those which are sinful, to those which are holy. It is a turning *for the first time* from our evil ways. It is the *commencement* of holy affections in a heart where such affections were before unknown.

Holy affections assume different forms, and have different names applied to them, according as they are put forth in view of different objects; but of whatever name or form, they possess the same general *nature or character*: Thus, the same kind of affection which, in view of the divine character, is holy, complacent *love*, will, in view of sin, be *repentance*; in view of Christ as a Savior, it will be *faith* or *trust*; in view of the divine favors, it will be *gratitude*; and in view of the divine government, it will be *submission*. The object of the holy affection may change, and with it the form and name of the affection, but the nature of it remains the same.

Conversion, as I said, is the *first* turning of a sinner from his evil ways. It is the *commencement* of holy affections in a heart, where such affections were before unknown. Up to this time, the heart of the sinner has been wholly sinful. It has been wholly under the influence of self and the world, so that holy affections have been entirely excluded. They have had no place there. But in the moment of conversion, holy affections are awakened. They are actively put forth, and it matters little what particular form these holy affections first assume. They may assume any form, provided they be but holy affections, and the *beginning* of them is conversion.

1. Conversion may be, and often is, the beginning of holy *love* to God;—of complacency in his character, and gratitude for his mercies. In illustration of this, we will suppose an individual who, during the greater part of his life, has been comparatively thoughtless of God. He has thought of almost everything else, but has forgotten God. And when, at any time, he has remembered God, he has been troubled. The thought has been painful to him. So far from clinging to God with affection and interest, he shrinks away from him with fear and dislike. He would gladly hide himself from God, as our guilty first parents did, among the trees of the garden. He banishes the unwelcome thought of him as soon as possible. The individual here supposed may not be an immoral man. He may not be a bad member of society. But the habitual state of his feelings towards God is such as has been described. But, at length, something occurs in the providence of God—some striking event, it may be—or the reading of some book—or the hearing of an awakening sermon—or the presentation of some truth or fact, which excites within him a new train of reflections. He thinks of God as he never thought before. He has views of his character such as he never had before. He begins to feel delight in this character. It is a wonderful character—a glorious character. It comes up with new interest before the mind. He wishes to contemplate it all the time. He is astonished that he has never seen it in the same light before. He thinks now of the goodness of God to him, and is melted under a sense of it. He wants words to express his gratitude to that Being who has borne so long with him, and has been so gracious and merciful towards him. The individual here spoken of may not know, at the time, what to think of these new impressions and feelings. He may have no thought that they are conversion, or that they indicate conversion. He may have no thought of himself as a converted person. But he *is* one. If he is not deceived respecting the nature of his feelings, he certainly *is* a converted soul. The new exercises above described are not those of nature, but of grace; the springing up of which, for the first time, in the sinner's heart, constituted his *turning*—his *conversion*. That was the happy moment which he will remember for ever, as the commencement of his walk with God.

2. Conversion may be, and often is, the beginning of *repentance*, of *godly sorrow* for sin. The subject of conversion, in this form of it, has passed the whole of his previous life in sin; not, it may be, in the prac-

tice of open immoralities, but in selfishness, in pride, in a love of the world, in thoughtlessness and vanity, in forgetfulness of God—in some way in the love and practice of sin. And yet his sins have given him very little trouble. He has had little thought or anxiety in respect to them. They have not been, perhaps, of the more disgraceful character. At least, they have not been known to be such. He has sinned in good company, and in altogether a respectable way; and he has contrived so to palliate and conceal his sins, that he has had little sorrow or distress on account of them. But, for some reason or other, his thoughts of late have been turned into a different channel. He has been led to review his past life, and see how his account stands with God. He has been led to do it with considerable scrutiny; and he is pained and frightened at the result. He had no idea that his sins were so numerous, or of so aggravated a character. He had no idea that they were characterised by such baseness. They now seem to him to be most unreasonable and odious, and he seems to himself to be a vile and odious creature on account of them. When he thinks of the manner in which he has treated God—his ingratitude towards him—his forgetfulness of him—his dislike of his character and transgression of his laws; he feels sorry and aggrieved. He feels humbled and ashamed. He cannot bear a view of himself. He begins to “loathe and abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Now this man, instead of growing better in his own opinion, during the change of feeling through which he has passed, has seemed to himself to be constantly growing worse. He never had such a sense of his own vileness as he now has. He has no thought of conversion, at least, as having been already accomplished in him. And yet, if his feelings are such as they have been described, he is already a converted person. He is a true penitent. He feels as David did, when he said, “Behold I am vile;” and the publican did, when he smote upon his breast, and cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” The first holy affection of which he was sensible was one of *penitence*; and the *beginning* of these repentings in his heart was his conversion.

3. Conversion is often the commencement of true *submission* to God. The subject of conversion, in this form of it, has always lived under the government of God, and has always been (though, perhaps, not always sensible of it) *unreconciled* to this government. He has never been truly willing that God should reign over him, and do with him according to his pleasure. He has never been willing to be entirely in the hands of God, and at his sovereign disposal. To be sure, when God’s plans have coincided with his own plans—when God has pleased him, and prospered him, and caused his cup to overflow with blessings, he has been very happy, and has felt as though he could be quite reconciled to be in the hands of God. But when God has seen fit to pursue a different course with him—crossing his track—blasting his hopes—disappointing his expectations, and defeating his cherished designs—taking from him this comfort, and that, and the other, and laying them low;—when God has seen fit to try him in this way, the secrets of his character have come out. He could not repress his murmurs and complaints.



He said, almost unconsciously, "This is a hard master. \* These are wounds without cause." His opposition, under such circumstances, has arisen, it may be, so high, that he has become frightened at himself. He had no idea that he had such a rebellious and wicked heart. He is sure that, with such a heart, he is in no situation to enjoy God, either in this world or the next; and he is led to commune with himself—to contemplate his relations to God, and the claims of God upon him, as he never did before. He reflects that God has a perfect *right* to deal with him as he has done—that in visiting him with sore afflictions, God has done no more than he had a *right* to do. He reflects that he *deserves* all these afflictions and a great deal more—that the divine dispensations towards him, so far from being unjust, have all been mingled with mercy. He farther considers that these dispensations, of which he had been disposed to complain, were certainly ordered in *wisdom* and *goodness*, and, if suitably improved by him, would work together for his good. He begins seriously to inquire, whether it is not a *privilege* to live under the government of God;—to be in the hands of one who can make no mistakes—who can indulge no ill-will towards any creature—who can do no wrong thing—and whose wise and good designs no enemy can ever disappoint or defeat. He dwells upon the subject in these various lights, till, at length, his heart begins to yield. He *submits* to the divine government. He more than submits—he rejoices in it. He rejoices that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. He feels a pleasure that is new to him, in resigning himself and all his concerns into the hands of this holy and sovereign God, to be disposed of as he shall see wisest and best. Now this man has experienced a great and radical change of feeling in regard to the divine government; and this change is *conversion*. It is the same which we must all experience, in one form or another, before we can see the kingdom of God.

4. I remark, again; conversion sometimes shows itself in an act of solemn *self-consecration*, or the adoption of a solemn *purpose* henceforth to live to the glory of God. Here is a person who, from the beginning of his moral existence to the present time, has lived only for himself. In all his plans, he has planned for himself. In all his labors, he has labored for himself. His own good—his own supposed interest and happiness, or that of his family and friends, has been to him the chief object of attraction and pursuit. Self, in some form, has been made the central point, and other things have been valued or rejected, just according as they bore upon this. After all, this man may not have been any more selfish than his neighbors; nor may his selfishness have been more manifest than theirs. It may have been concealed, honeyed over, as it commonly is, under an imposing exterior of outward professions and appearances. Still, it was *there*; and as soon as he comes to look closely into his heart, he sees it there. He can but see it. And the sight of it is painful to him. It is humbling to him. He sees that he has been living for a very inferior and unworthy object—that he has been living after a most miserable manner. He knows that

he *ought* to "live no longer unto himself, but to him who died for him and rose again;"—that he *ought* to "glorify God in his body and spirit, which are God's;"—that "whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does," he *ought* to "do all to the glory of God." He sees now the reasonableness and propriety of these requisitions, and he begins to yield to them. He begins to exalt the Lord God in his heart—to set him up, above self, above the world, above everything. He consecrates and devotes himself to God, and desires and prays that he may be enabled, henceforth, to live to his glory. Here we have another exhibition of conversion—the commencement of holy exercises under another name and form. Whenever persons can thus renounce self and the world—when, from the heart, they can give up themselves to God, and consecrate and devote themselves to his service, undoubtedly they are converted persons.

5. I remark once more; conversion may be, and often is, the commencement of *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. In illustration of this, we will suppose an individual, who is deeply and truly convinced of sin. He sees himself to be a guilty and lost sinner, who has no means of hope or help in himself, and can discover no method of deliverance from any other quarter. He knows that a just sentence of condemnation has been passed upon him, and, for aught that appears, he must sink for ever under it. He has been in this state of conviction, distress, and almost of despair, it may be, for a long time, looking for light, but beholds darkness; seeking rest, but finding none. At length, some passage of scripture is opened and applied to him, by the help of which he gets a view of the Savior. He sees him to be almighty and all-sufficient—just such a Savior as his perishing case requires. He sees him extend his gracious arms, and hears him say, in accents of love, "Come, come; for all things are now ready." And now he *yields* to the winning invitation. He falls at once into Jesus' arms. With joy and gratitude he embraces the offered Savior, and commits himself to his faithful hands.

• The case of the gifted and excellent Cowper is so illustrative of this form of conversion, that I shall be excused in referring to it. He had been for months under the most distressing convictions of sin, and in a state of despair bordering on madness, when the period of his deliverance, at length, arrived. He was reading in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, respecting the way of salvation by Christ, when, says he, "immediately I received strength to *believe*, and the full beams of the sun of righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement which Christ had made, saw my pardon sealed in his blood, and all the fulness and completeness of his justification. *In a moment I believed and received the gospel.* And now, unless the almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport, I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. But the work of the Holy Spirit is best described in his own words; it was 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' How glad should

I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving! I lost no opportunity in repairing to a throne of grace, I flew to it with an earnestness irresistible and never to be satisfied. Could I help it? Could I do otherwise than love and rejoice in my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus? For many succeeding weeks, tears were ready to flow, if I did but speak of the gospel, or so much as mention the name of Jesus. To rejoice day and night was all my employment. Too happy to sleep much, I thought it was lost time that was spent in slumber. Oh! that the ardor of my first love had continued.”\*

I have been the more particular in describing conversion in hope that the nature of it may be understood. It is, as you perceive, no physical change—no passive transformation, but a change in the character of our internal exercises or affections, from those which are, in some form, *sinful*, to those which are, in some form, *holy*. And it is of little importance, what particular form the change assumes, or how it is first developed, provided it *be* the change which has been described. The first holy exercise of which the individual is sensible, may be one of love, or penitence, or submission, or faith. This is a circumstance of minor consequence, provided the new exercise be a holy one, and be followed out (as it will be) by newness of life and new obedience.

This new exercise, which is put forth in conversion, and in the putting forth of which conversion consists, from the nature of the case, is *actively* put forth. It can be put forth in no other way. It is wrought in us by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, but in a manner perfectly consistent with the free and natural actings of our own minds. Thus, while the glory of the change in question is devoutly to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, as its author, the change itself is accomplished *in us*, and in the free and regular exercise of our own powers. It is *we* that love—we that repent—we that believe, submit, and obey—we that turn from our evil ways, and commence walking in those ways of wisdom which are pleasantness, and those paths which are peace.

Having thus described, as well as I am able, the *nature* of conversion, the way is prepared to urge, as proposed,

II. The *importance* of it. It will be my endeavor, under this branch of the subject, to convince and persuade the unconverted part of this assembly in reference to a most important question of duty. I shall hope to persuade some of them, at least, to *turn from their evil ways*, and put forth those new and holy affections which the gospel requires.

The *first* argument I shall urge in favor of conversion is, that it is, in itself, *reasonable*. The turning, the change, spoken of in the text, is altogether a reasonable change. If it were not so, I certainly would not urge it; and if I cannot make it appear that it is so, I will not ask you farther to consider it. But is it not reasonable, my hearers? Be pleased to look at it under each of the forms that have been presented, and see if, in any view, and every view that can be taken of the subject, the change in conversion is not reasonable.

\* Life of Cowper, by himself, p. 67.

1. I have said that conversion is often the beginning of *holy love* to the Supreme Being. And is it not in the highest degree reasonable, to love this great and glorious Being—who is infinitely lovely—whose character combines, in perfection, every amiable and attractive quality? What can be more reasonable than to love a *benefactor*? And is not God our greatest Benefactor? What being has ever done or can do, in any measure, so much for us as God? And shall we not be willing to return to him the grateful love and affection of our hearts? Assuredly, I have the conscience of every hearer on my side, when I insist that the very first and plainest dictate of reason, in reference to our religious concerns, is, that we *love God*. But the moment we begin to love God—the true God—the God of the Bible—with a holy, complacent, grateful love, we are converted.

2. I have said that conversion is often the beginning of *repentance*, of *godly sorrow* for sin. And what can be more reasonable, than sorrow for a fault? The merest child has understanding enough to perceive, that when he does wrong, he ought to be sorry for it. If one of your neighbors injuriously treats either of you, you think that he ought to be sorry for what he has done, and make you all the reparation in his power. Now every sin is injuriously treating the Supreme Being. It is a fault committed directly against God. And no words can make the proposition plainer than it is on the bare presentation of it, that godly sorrow for sin—that sorrow which worketh repentance unto life—is altogether reasonable.

3. I have said that conversion is often the beginning of *holy submission* to God. And is not this a reasonable duty? God has certainly a right to rule and reign over us. He made us out of nothing. He is the author and bestower of all our blessings. We are absolutely *his*, and he has a right to give us laws, and to dispose of us according to his pleasure. And for us to rebel against his government, is to resist, at every step, what is right. For us to submit to his government is barely to yield to him his right—to accord to him what is obviously his due, and our duty.—But the government of God is not only rightful and legitimate, it is *wise* and *good*. It is absolutely perfect. The ends at which it aims are the noblest possible. The means by which it proposes to secure these ends are the most proper and desirable that can be conceived. It is the height of folly, therefore, as well as of wickedness, to resist such a government. It is the perfection of reason to submit to it, and rejoice in it.

4. I have said that conversion not unfrequently exhibits itself in the adoption of a solemn, deliberate *purpose*, henceforth to live, not unto ourselves, but to the glory of the Supreme Being. And is it not, in this view, a reasonable service? What can be more unreasonable than selfishness? What is there in this little self, to entitle it to supreme regard? What are *my* little separate interests, that I should exalt them above God—above the interests of the universe—above everything? That I should make these a central point, and estimate other things only according as they bear upon this?—Suppose, for the sake of



illustration, that this earth were to rebel against the sun, and instead of revolving around it as a centre, should insist that the sun, and all the planets, and all their satellites, should commence revolving about itself. Yet such a revolt in the natural world would certainly not be more unreasonable, or be attended by more disastrous consequences, than is selfishness in the moral world. Nor could the return of the revolted earth, under the circumstances supposed, to its natural position and movements in the solar system, be more strenuously demanded by the laws of nature, than is the return of sordid, selfish man to the great centre of moral attraction and interest, demanded by the laws of reason and of right.

5. I have said that conversion is often the commencement of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And viewed in this light it is certainly reasonable. What are the *facts* in the case? Here is the sinner, oppressed with guilt, condemned by the law, with no means of help or deliverance in his power, and with nothing in prospect, but "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." And here is the great Savior with extended arms;—able to save him—willing to save him—inviting him to come and receive salvation, as the gift of his love. And now is it not reasonable that the sinner should listen and comply? Is it not of all things most reasonable, that he should come to Christ, and embrace him as the wretched Cowper did, and rejoice in the fulness of his salvation.

You see, then, my hearers, in every view which can be taken of the subject, that *the conversion of the heart*—that *turning from sin* which I am endeavoring to urge upon you, is a most reasonable service. I urge it upon you, because it is a reasonable service. It is one, I know, which your own reason, not less than mine—which your own conscience, not less than the word of God, demands.

The argument here urged in favor of conversion should be alone sufficient, even if there were no other. We ought to be willing to do what is, in itself, *reasonable* and *right*, let the consequences be what they may. But other and weighty reasons in favor of an immediate turning from sin, growing out of the blessed *consequences* of such a change, remain to be proposed.

I observe, therefore, in the *second* place, that conversion is followed by *the best present results*. It saves from much misery and confers much happiness in the present life. It dries up many sources of *unhappiness*, which are open to us while living in sin, and from which nothing but conversion can deliver us.

1. One of these consists in the stings and reproaches of conscience. Every sinner has a conscience—one which, however seared and stifled, will, at times, rebuke and distress him. It will tell him of neglected duties, and violated obligations—of mercies abused, and guilt incurred. It will summon him, at times, to a solemn reckoning, and warn him of the awful retribution that awaits him. The mental agonies which are endured from the stings and reproaches of conscience, are often very great. They are enough to embitter the whole cup of life. And there is no way in which these miseries can be assuaged or mitigated, but by

conversion. Let the sinner turn from his evil ways, and enter on the possession and practice of holiness, and that same conscience, which before was a terror and a trouble to him, will be, henceforth, his most complacent associate. It will whisper peace to his pained heart, and bless him with its approving smiles.

2. Another source of unhappiness to the sinner, while living in indulged sin, grows out of that *war with himself*—that *inward struggle and conflict*, to which he is perpetually subject. This is a conflict between the different parts of his own moral nature, which the practice of sin has set at variance, and which nothing but conversion can ever harmonize. In his present state, reason dictates one thing to the sinner, and he pursues another. Conscience points him in one direction, and he follows another. His better judgment whispers, "This is the way; walk ye in it;" but his rebellious heart refuses to obey. And in this interminable conflict, between reason and inclination, conscience and will, the better judgment and an unyielding heart, his soul is continually disturbed and agitated. It is rendered like "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." When the sinner turns from his evil ways, and never before, this war in his bosom ceases. In the moment of conversion, the heart yields, the will bows, and the nobler principles of the soul become predominant. Thenceforward, and never before, are they listened to and obeyed.

3. Still another source of unhappiness to the sinner consists in a continual and painful sense of *unpreparedness* to meet God in his providential dispensations.—Much as the sinner is unreconciled to God, he knows that he is in his sovereign hands, to do with him as he pleases. He can kill him or spare him alive, prosper or afflict him, as seemeth good in his sight. He knows, too, that the providences of God are inscrutable. Between himself and the entire future, there hangs up a dark and impenetrable curtain, so that he cannot tell what a day or an hour may bring forth. He is in health to-day, but he may be sick to-morrow. He is in prosperity to-day, but he may be in deep affliction to-morrow. He is alive on the earth to-day, but to-morrow he may be dead, and in the world of despair. He is completely in the hands of God; and in what manner God is intending to dispose of him he cannot tell. And when he thinks of this subject, as think he must at times, he feels disquieted. He feels alarmed. He knows he is not ready to meet God in his providences—especially in those distressing, crushing providences, which may be very near to overwhelm him. Now there is no way, sinner, in which this source of unhappiness can ever be dried up, but by conversion. Only turn from your sins, and enter at once into the service of Christ, and you are prepared for anything. Nothing can injure you. Come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, life or death, you are prepared to meet it. You are now in the number of those, to whom "all things work together for good."

4. I shall mention but another source of unhappiness to the sinner, while living in a course of sin, and this is his constant feeling of *exposure* to the merited wrath and indignation of heaven. He knows that

that God, at whose mercy he lies, and on whose bounty he lives, is angry with him. He knows that he *must* be angry with him. He sees the rod of his anger extended over him, ready to inflict the merited vengeance; and he trembles at his dread exposure. He feels, as an aged sinner once told me that he had felt habitually for forty years,—as though a drawn dagger was all the while pointed at his heart. Now with such a feeling, it matters little what our worldly circumstances may be. We may be as rich as Cræsus, and may have ever so much of the honors and pleasures of the world; this feeling of *exposure* to the merited wrath of God is alone sufficient to spoil all our pleasures.

Some of you recollect the story, which we used to read when we were children at school, of the tyrant of Sicily and his flatterer. This flatterer undertook to persuade Dionysius, the tyrant, that he was the happiest man in the world. "You have riches, honors, and pleasures in abundance—everything that your heart can desire—and you are the happiest man in the world." "Well, flatterer," says Dionysius, "have you a mind to try it?" "Why, yes; I should like to try it very much." And so the king ordered a splendid banquet to be prepared for him. The tables were loaded with all the dainties of the East; the flatterer was seated down to them in great state; and for a moment, he thought himself happy. But just as he was beginning to taste of the feast, he chanced to cast his eye upward, when he saw a glittering sword, suspended by a single hair, and hanging directly over his head. Immediately the cup of pleasure was dashed from his lips. His sensual enjoyments were all spoiled. He begged the king to remove him, in a moment, from a situation so appalling and so dreadful.—Now this fitly illustrates the case of the sinner, under the government of God. Whatever his worldly circumstances may be, there hangs suspended over him, by a single hair, the glittering sword of divine wrath. It may fall at any time. It *must* fall in a very little time, and pierce him to the soul. So far as his eyes are open to see anything of a spiritual nature, he must see his awful danger. He must fear and tremble in view of it. And there is no way in which he can quiet these fears, and deliver himself from this state of horrible exposure, but by conversion. Let him turn from his sins, and give his heart to God, and the flaming sword is at once sheathed. It is taken out of the way, and so far from trembling in prospect of the coming wrath, he now rejoices in a Savior's love.

It is admitted that the present life is short, and that the concerns of this life are trifles, compared with the weightier concerns of eternity. And yet it is of some importance to us to be happy here—to be happy, not in the feverish pleasures of sin, but on *solid, enduring principles*. And sure I am, that there is no such happiness for any being, in the practice of wickedness. It is only by *turning from sin*, or by *conversion*, that we have it in our power to secure substantial enjoyments in the present world.

Conversion is important, in the *third* place, as it is the only way in which to secure the *approbation* and *favor* of the Supreme Being.

This consideration may seem trifling to some; but a moment's reflection will satisfy us that it is one, in itself, of very great interest and importance. Suppose, my impenitent hearer, that by some act of yours, you could secure the decided approbation of all the inhabitants of this *state*, or of this great *nation*. Or, to extend your views farther, suppose, by this act, you could secure the united approbation of the *world*. By one act, you could draw towards yourself the eyes of the whole world, and could secure the favor of all its inhabitants, so that your name should dwell on every heart, and your praises should be sounded by every tongue. Or, to extend your views still farther, suppose, by this one act, you could make yourself known, and most favorably known, to the entire *universe* of created beings. You could arrest the notice of angels, as well as of men, and cause all creatures to cast upon you a look of favor, and a smile of love. Would you not think such an act worth performing? Would not the *motives*, the *inducements* to the performance of it be exceedingly powerful? But what, I ask, is the favor of the united world, or of the created universe, compared with the favor and approbation of God? We see, at once, that it is as nothing. The favor of the world could be, at best, but mere breath—changing, fluctuating as the wind that blows; but the favor of God is as unchanging as his throne. The favor of the world must soon pass away and be forgotten; but the favor of God will endure for ever. The immutable, everlasting favor of God, which is represented in the scriptures as life, and as even better than life, can be secured by *conversion*, and in no other way. While we persist in our sins, we cannot enjoy it. But when we penitently turn from them, it is freely, gratuitously bestowed.

In the *fourth* place, I urge the importance of conversion, from the consideration suggested in the text. It *saves from death*. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" The death here spoken of cannot be *temporal dissolution*; because conversion does not save from that. Converted persons die *temporally*, as well as others. The death intended is doubtless *eternal death*—that death which is represented, in other parts of the scriptures, as the proper wages and desert of sin. The future punishment of the wicked is set forth in the scriptures, by a variety of terrific and awful figures. But I know of no figurative representation of it more expressive and appalling, than that employed in the text. It is *death—eternal death*. Did you ever, my impenitent friend, stand by the bedside of a dying fellow creature? Did you witness, hour after hour, his dissolving agonies? Did you see his glazed eye, and the cold sweat upon his face; his anguished struggles, and convulsive throes? Did you hear him groan? Did you see him die? Now, this is *literal*, temporal death; and these mortal agonies, the inspired writers have laid hold of, that, under the image of them as enduring for ever, they might adequately set forth the future punishment of the lost. This future punishment is *eternal death*. It is to be eternally dying, and never to die. It is to writhe, and toss, and groan, and agonize for ever



in the struggle with death, and yet death never come to the rescue—never come to end the conflict. This, I repeat, is *eternal death*. This is the death referred to in the text, from which conversion will save the sinner, and from which nothing else can. If he will turn from his evil ways, he need not die; but persisting in them, there is no help for him. There is, in this case, no deliverer from that dreadful destruction which has been described.

But conversion does more than to save from death.

I urge, in the *fifth* place, that it secures *life*—immortal life and bliss to the soul. It introduces those who experience it into the family of God. It makes them heirs of all the promises—"heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." They are to be kept, while here on earth, by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Their path is to be that of the just, which shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. When they go down into the dark valley, they shall not be deserted. They shall be sustained, comforted, and carried triumphantly through. And when they appear in other worlds, they shall go to dwell with Christ, with angels, and with all the redeemed, in the Paradise of God above. In the morning of the resurrection, their bodies shall be raised, glorious bodies, and be re-united to their happy, triumphing souls. Amid all the terrors of the judgment, they shall stand undismayed. In the issues of it, they shall be acquitted and blessed, and be caught away from the judgment-bar to meet their Lord in the air;—and so shall they ever be with the Lord. They are to have their eternal dwelling amid the glories of the heavenly state. They are to advance in knowledge, holiness and bliss—their powers ever expanding, and ever delightfully occupied—their measure ever enlarging, and ever full—for ever and ever.

Such, in its *consequences*—its happy, glorious, interminable consequences—is conversion. And who will say that, considered as an *event*, a *change*, it is not one of amazing interest? Who will pretend that, as a *duty*, it is not one of the most urgent character, and of the greatest possible importance? Other duties may be neglected, and our highest interests may not be put at hazard. But no person can neglect or delay the duty of *conversion*, without putting at hazard everything which ought to be dear to him—his present peace, and his future joys—his comforts in this life, and his everlasting consolations beyond the grave.

I conclude, with appealing directly to the unconverted part of this assembly, and asking them whether they will not now comply with the exhortation in the text? Will you not now listen to the pleading voice of your heavenly Father, and turn from your evil ways? You have heard what this conversion *is*, which we urge upon you. You have heard of the *reasonableness*, the *propriety* of it, in every form which it assumes—in every view which can be taken of the subject. You have heard of the miseries which it alleviates—the sources of unhappiness which it dries up—the divine favor which it secures—the joys and privileges which it confers, in the present world. You have

heard of that dreadful death, from which conversion, and this alone, can save you; and of that immortal, enduring, and most glorious life to which it conducts you. And now the question is pressed home upon you, in all its force, *What will you do?* Will you listen? Will you obey? Will you *turn*? You may, if you will. You *must* if you will. And if you will not, you *cannot*. What I mean to say is, this change can never be accomplished in you, but with the hearty concurrence and co-operation of your own wills. Nor is this a subject on which you can long balance yourself, so as not to decide it either way. The truth is, you *must* decide it, one way or the other, and you will. If you do not repent of your sins, you will persist in them. If you do not come to Christ, you will reject him. If you do not turn, you will continue as you are. Again, then, I ask, and I would press the inquiry with all the tenderness and earnestness of which I am capable: *What will you do?* Will you yield to the suggestions of Satan, and your own evil hearts, and venture on in sin, and risk the consequences? Or will you not rather listen to the monitions of conscience—the impulses of the Spirit—and the voice of God, crying to you in his word, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?*

## SERMON CCCXXVIII.

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### THE LIVING REDEEMER.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."—JOB xix. 25, 26.

THE very striking and solemn manner of its introduction, will not allow us to doubt that the passage out of which our text is taken, was pronounced by Job from a sudden impulse of prophetic inspiration. In the former part of the chapter he is bowed to the dust under his accumulated distresses, and seems to have given up all hope of a deliverance in this life. He suffers more keenly from the cruel persecution of mistaken friends, who, instead of comforting him with their sympathy, upbraid him in his calamities, as though they were judgments upon him for unusual guilt, and his religion a detected hypocrisy. He gives vent to his anguish in that touching appeal, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" In this extremity of his sorrow, God comes to his relief and sustains him with grace according to his need. He bursts forth with a vehemence and confidence of language which must have been suggested by an immediate revelation of God's redeeming love. "O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book (or inscribed on a memorial!) that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and, though worms destroy this body, yet, in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another, though my reins be consumed within me."

Great force is added to the passage, if we admit the not improbable opinion of Schultens, (one of the best, if not the very best commentators upon this part of the Scriptures,) that the patriarch, in the verses introductory to the prophetic declaration, refers to an inscription upon a sepulchral stone.

O that my words were now written down !  
 O that they were inscribed on a memorial !  
 With an iron stylus and lead,  
 That they were engraven for ever upon a rock.

He relies upon God for his ultimate and full vindication. Expecting to go down to the grave under the reproach of guilt, he would have it engraven upon the stone at the door of his sepulchre, that his trust was in his Redeemer—the Living One, who, he believed, at the last days would stand upon the earth, and, raising up his body from the dust, would admit him to a personal enjoyment of his presence and favor for ever.

Beloved christians, what Job knew at best in part, we know, from the consenting testimony of prophets and apostles, in the fulness of its saving truth. He, “of whom Moses and all the prophets did write,” has come. He has appeared upon the earth—Jesus, the Son of God, our Elder Brother—and inspired historians and apostles, who were eyewitnesses of the stupendous facts, declare to us, that, having purchased our redemption by his vicarious death upon the cross, he rose again from the dead, leaving the broken bars of death as the earnest of our resurrection, and ascended to the right hand of God in the heavens, from whence he has promised to come, the second time, to take all his people, body and soul, up with him to glory. With what confidence then should every christian exclaim this day, “I know that my Redeemer liveth !”

And how high and holy should be the aim and hope which such a faith should awaken in our souls !

You will at once see, that our text, short as it is, contains vastly more than we can even touch upon in a single sermon. Our time will not be enough for a sufficient meditation upon the one great thought I have selected from the rest—the blessedness of faith in a living Redeemer.

We shall consider,

I. The meaning of the term *Redeemer*, as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. And,

II. The excellence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a *living Redeemer*.

I. The meaning of the term *Redeemer*, as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew word GOEL, which is here and elsewhere rendered Redeemer, has two significations. One, to be stained or polluted with blood ; the other, to ransom, redeem, or purchase back. The first is with little doubt the original signification.

The use of the word, as an official designation, arose in this manner :

From the earliest times, the life of a murderer was considered forfeit ; but, as the laws in those simple forms of society were few, the punishment of the murderer was left to the nearest kinsman of the slain person, who not only had a right to avenge the death of his relation, but was dishonored until he had done so. This primeval law was, in the most solemn manner, confirmed by God himself, in the revelation he made to



Noah and his sons after the flood, when he said, "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man; whose sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." From this point the law of the avenger went with the families of man as they became scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth. It can be traced among the Greeks and the Romans, the early Germans, Britons, and Saxons. The Gentoo code (the most ancient law of India) contains no penalty for murder, clearly leaving it to the avenger of blood; and, as is well known, the vengeance of an American savage for a slain kinsman never sleeps until it is satiated with the blood of the slayer. It was in full force among the Jews, as we see in the setting apart of cities of refuge from the pursuing avenger to soften the rigor of the law in more pardonable cases, and in the story of the widow of Tekoah, who pleaded before David for her remaining son, who had murdered his brother, that his life might be spared from the avengers of blood, lest she should be made childless. "Indeed," says Blackstone, speaking of the universality of this law, "it seems as if the finger of Nature had pointed it out to mankind." But as an excellent writer justly remarks, "The finger of Nature is no other than the law of God."

The duties of the Redeemer, especially among the Jews, were increased, as the forms of society became more complicated.

Thus it was his duty or right to *deliver his kinsman out of captivity by force or ransom*, and to buy out or redeem him when his liberty had been forfeited by debt. "If," says the law of Moses, "thy brother wax poor and sell himself . . . after that he is sold, he may be redeemed again: one of his brethren may redeem him." (Lev. xxv., 47, 48.)

In him was the right of *buying back an inheritance* that had passed out of the hands of a poorer kinsman. "If thy brother be waxed poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kindred come to redeem it, then shall he redeem what his brother hath sold." (Lev. xxv., 25.)

So it was he who stood forth and *advocated the right of those who were too weak to sustain their own cause*, as in the case of the female. You have a beautiful instance of this in the story of Ruth and Boaz, and indeed to this day the law allows a woman to appear by her next friend.

"This right of redemption," says the valuable author whom we have already quoted, "was a practice purposely invented to prefigure and represent the mode in which the promised Messiah would ransom his people." Nor is it possible to understand those passages of scripture which treat of our redemption, without a knowledge of this office of the kinsman Redeemer. I say *kinsman* Redeemer, for it was essential to the constitution of a Redeemer that he should be a near kinsman of those in whose behalf he acted. All these offices of the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ was fitted to sustain, and has executed, or will execute for us. To become our Redeemer he became our *kinsman*. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Forasmuch as the children

are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same." Jehovah our righteousness is our kinsman Redeemer.

He has taken vengeance upon the great enemy of our race, when as "the seed of the woman" he "bruised the head of the serpent," "destroying death and him that had the power of death," that he might snatch the souls of his people from the mighty and deliver the captives of Satan from his power. (St. Luke i., 71, 74.)

He hath redeemed his people from under the sentence of the law and their liability to a perpetual imprisonment by paying in his own death the price of their redemption. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

He also (blessed be his name!) when our fair inheritance in God's favor was lost, and man, shut out from his native paradise, was too poor to buy it back again, appeared in our behalf, and redeemed it for us by his own righteousness, so that now through grace the merits of that righteousness entitle the believer to an entrance within the second paradise of God.

And he, when we were too weak and unworthy to stand up and plead our own cause before God, undertook its advocacy himself, and became our ever ready and availing intercessor with the Father.

Thus there are three principal things intended by Christ's title of Redeemer.

1. Atonement or satisfaction made to the divine law in behalf of his people.
2. Deliverance and salvation of his people from all their enemies and difficulties.
3. And the securing for them an eternal inheritance of life and blessedness.

Keeping these in our minds let us now consider

II. The excellence of our Lord Jesus as a *living* Redeemer.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

He whom Job knew to be his Redeemer is the only begotten Son of God in whom we trust. The patient patriarch rejoiced in him as the Living one, who beheld his sufferings and had compassion on him, believing that he would according to his promise accomplish a full redemption. It is our greater privilege to rejoice in Him as having provided by the infinite merits of his life and death upon earth all that was now necessary to our redemption, and living again to secure and apply the benefits of that redemption to all who believe upon his name.

The Son of Man, who spake in revelation to the disciple who "was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ," speaks by his Gospel to every believer, saying, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold! I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

The excellence of Christ as our living Redeemer is seen in his *resurrection*, in his *power*, and in his *glory*.

1. In his *resurrection*. The declaration was early made that with-

out the shedding of blood there was no remission. By sin our lives were all forfeited, and could only be returned by a sufficient life offered and accepted in our behalf. The penalty of the law must be utterly paid and its just vengeance exhausted in our behalf, before the just God could consistently with his own word justify a sinner. Under the Jewish law, and before it, up to the sacrifice of Abel, innumerable victims had bled for men, but still new victims were required, until the Lamb of God, the realities of those types, and substances of those shadows, came and offered himself without spot upon the cross. His blood was shed. He gave up the ghost. His life was taken. But on the third day, he that was the sacrifice for sin, who was actually crucified, dead, and buried, rises again from the dead, alive in body and soul, because it was not possible that he should be holden of death. Why? Because his death was sufficient, because his life satisfied the law, because the penalty was exhausted, because, having given himself up to the law that he might redeem his people, now that the full price was paid, the law, or death its avenger, had no more power over him. "I have power," said he "to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again." Now there is no more need of victims to be slain upon the altar, "the sacrifice and the oblation hath ceased." Jesus living after his death assures us that the atonement was *complete*. Christ is able to save unto the uttermost because he is our Living Redeemer.

The scriptures which speak of Christ rising again from the dead, declare also that God the Father raised him up. But his resurrection by the Father was a close consequence of the sufficiency of his death. "The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood* of the everlasting covenant." Christ had undertaken the atonement on the express promise and covenant of the Father to accept the sufficient sacrifice as the ground of pardon to the believer, and now that the atonement has been made, and the blood whose merit in the sight of God is beyond all price has been shed, God, by virtue of his covenant, declares the satisfaction complete by raising up the Savior from the dead. The atonement is declared complete by Christ rising in his own power; it is declared to be *accepted by the Father*, inasmuch as he raised him in token of his wrath having passed away.

But, the resurrection of Jesus which is ascribed to his own power, and to the power of the Father, is also ascribed to the power of the Holy Ghost. "Declared," saith the apostle in Romans, "to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." And in Ephesians he declares that the same mighty POWER (even the Holy Ghost) which raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, quickens with him all his people who were dead in trespasses and sins. Christ died to save his people from their sins, from that bondage to sin which is part of the punishment of sin. Unless his people were thus quickened with a new and holy life, his death was in vain. But in his resurrection by the Holy Ghost, we have the earnest of a certain and holy spiritual resurrection of all who

by faith are members of his body. The Holy Ghost thus assures the success of the atonement of Christ the crucified, in the quickened body of our living Redeemer.

Here then, in Christ's raising himself, you see the *sufficiency* of the atonement. In the Father's raising of him, you see the *acceptance* of the atonement. In his being quickened by the Holy Ghost, you see the *power* of the atonement, for the certain salvation of all who rely upon his finished work. But for the resurrection of Christ from the dead, our faith would be vain, our preaching vain, and we are yet in our sins. Now in our living Redeemer, we have the testimony of the whole blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

## 2. In his *power*.

Christ not only rose again from the dead, but he ascended up on high; the Father raises him to his own right hand, giving him a name that is above every name, and the Holy Ghost becomes according to the covenant of redemption, his spirit.

But as he was crucified in our nature, and as he rose from the dead in our nature, so he ascended to heavenly power in our nature. He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, the man Christ Jesus. The Immanuel receives his power, as he derived his resurrection, from the consent and covenant of the adorable Trinity; and this power is given him for the deliverance and protection of his people from all their enemies and difficulties.

The christian, after he is quickened together with Christ, has yet to contend with many enemies, to meet with many temptations, and to bear many afflictions, before he reaches the consummation of his hope.

Behold, then, the excellence of his living Redeemer.

The Son of God, in his power, is yet his kinsman. He still wears his human nature. He remembers his own conflicts, his own temptations, his own sorrows. He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Beneath his crown of glory, are the scars of the thorns. The hand that grasps his sceptre bears the print of the nail. The feet, at which all heaven is prostrate, show the past torture of the cross. Nay, in his blessed heart, the spear has left its deep trace of insult. Nowhere may the believer go in the suffering of trial but the Redeemer has gone before him. He knows that his Redeemer liveth—that he liveth his elder brother, his sympathizing friend, his Savior in power, mighty to sustain by his own almighty arm. The living Redeemer is mighty to save by his intercession with the Father. He is now near to his Father, as the acknowledged and sufficient atoner. He is near to his Father as his only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased. He shows to his Father the proofs of his passion—the deeds of his righteousness. By his own infinite mind he enters deep into the Father's counsels. Can he plead in vain? Thus, then, the believer is always sure of welcome access to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy and find grace to help him in every time of need. The ascended Redeemer,



is our new and *living* way, our sure and ever ready deliverer, for, "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

The living Redeemer is head over all things to his church. Not an angel of heaven but is at his command, not an evil spirit but quails at his name, not an operation of nature or of providence but is controlled and ordered by his will. But above all, the infinite and adorable Holy Spirit graciously condescends to be the Spirit of Christ. And all this is for his church, all this is for every believer that loves and trusts his promise. What then can prevail against him who puts his trust in a living Redeemer's power? Living near to the living One, he has providence as his guard, nature as his property, heaven as his servant, hell at his feet, and God within him.

### 3. In his *glory*.

God made man for glory. He crowned him with power. He made him a little lower than the angels. He admitted him to his intimate love and communion. But sin has lost man this fair inheritance of glory, and power, and dignity, and divine love. Death—the death of the body, with the sicknesses, and pains, and infirmities that go before, and the corruption and eternal anguish that follow after, the death of the soul, with its pollution in this life and despair in that which is to come—death, temporal and eternal, has taken the place of primeval excellence. It is the office of the living Redeemer to restore this inheritance, and that he will accomplish his purpose, we have a blessed earnest, for "we see Jesus," our kinsman, "who," in our stead, "was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." Sin lost us our inheritance. Christ, by his sufficient atonement, takes away the sin of every believer; with his perfect righteousness, he buys back our lost possession, and, as our kinsman Redeemer, he enters for us, our forerunner, into the second paradise of God. In the glory of the God-man, you behold the final and certain glory of all his redeemed. How glorious is his risen body! The favored three beheld it upon Tabor, and, by faith, we all behold it in heaven. How lustrous now is the countenance of the Son of Mary? Can this be the face that was channelled with tears, and convulsed with grief? How radiance beams from that form that here was weary and worn, an hungered and athirst—that was buffeted and spit upon—that staggered beneath the cross—that with strong shudderings making the earth to quake, gave up the ghost—that lay supine in the arms of weeping friends, and cold in the rocky tomb? Yes, believers, this was he who was dead, and now is alive again for evermore. He that plucked out the sting from death has ravished the victory from the grave. He suffers no more, weeps no more, shall die no more. His new life is an immortal youth.

Thus shall all his redeemed arise. Death may triumph over them for a time, and the worm feed upon their flesh. Yet, their Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, and call forth their corruption to incorruption, their mortal to immortality. In their flesh shall they see God. Their adoption shall be complete, their

bodies shall be redeemed, the whole man shall be received into glory, and as Moses and Elias, the patterns of perfect redemption, shone in glory like the Lord's on the holy mount, so shall all the redeemed be radiant with the Redeemer's glory for ever more.

The man Christ Jesus has entered heaven. The redeemed body and soul of man can live there, for there our kinsman made like unto us, lives. There he has gone to prepare places for them. There he will receive them unto himself, pure in body, pure in soul, again to walk with God among trees that never shall fade, and in a communion without shame or remorse. The soul shall drink in the divine teachings. No angel shall guard the tree of life, no death follow the appetite ever strong but ever satisfied by the tree of knowledge. The blood of the Paschal Lamb is sprinkled upon the lintels of the everlasting gates, and death shall enter there no more for ever.

As the Redeemer lives in glory immortal and incorruptible, so shall they live who put their trust in a living Redeemer. They are members of his glorious body, as they have been crucified with him by faith on the cross. While the head lives, they shall live. They are one with Christ for ever. \* He remains for ever king unto God, and the crown upon the head of Jesus is the coronation of his body the church. For ever does he minister unto God, a high priest offering holy and happy sacrifices of praise, and the mitre on the head sanctifies the whole body to an immortal priesthood. Yes, assuredly as Jesus our kinsman is glorious in his person, his kingdom and his priesthood, so glorious shall be they who trust in a Living Redeemer, and their glory shall have no end.

How excellent is our Living Redeemer! How blessed a thing it is now to know that our Redeemer liveth! To rely upon his atonement for our sins, his deliverance from our dangers, his redemption of our immortal blessedness! To believe and to share in his resurrection from the grave, his power upon the throne, and his glory with the Father.

Christian, know that your Redeemer liveth! O let none hesitate, however sinful or unworthy they may be, to rely upon the sufficiency of that atonement which exhausted death, was accepted by the Father, and is applied by the Spirit. Let none doubt, however weak and erring they may be, the security of their souls and the comfort of their hearts amidst all trial, and temptation, and sorrow, who have a living Redeemer, sympathizing with them in heaven, interceding for them with the Father, and ready to impart all power, even his own almighty and divine spirit, to those who trust his grace.

Let none refuse to bear with patience all the seeming ills of this life, to work with an untiring courage all the will of God, and to educate their spirits in holy knowledge, and love, and praise, when they may, through the living Redeemer, obtain incorruption, immortality, eternal dignity, and perpetual joy in holy praise.

But let all remember, none can have a part in the living Redeemer who have not put their trust in his cross, for the pardon of all their sins.

None can share in that atonement if they be not quickened unto a new life of holiness, by the power of the spirit of God.

None can prevail over sin and the tempter, who look not for grace to Christ upon his throne.

None shall enter into heaven at the resurrection of the just whom the blood of Christ has not washed, the spirit of Christ has not sanctified, and the power of Christ has not sustained.

Terrible shall be the fate of those who will not sue for pardon, though the blood of the Redeemer cleanses from all sin.

Who continue in wickedness, though the Holy Ghost stands ready to assist their repentance. Who never pray, though Christ lives to intercede. Terrible shall be their fate who thus despise and provoke the living Redeemer, for he who now lives to bless, will then live to take vengeance on the transgressors, and while the penitent believer enters into the joy of his Lord, they shall be crushed beneath the wrath of the Lamb whose vengeance is as eternal as his love.

O, then, careless soul, know that the Redeemer liveth. Make him your Redeemer. Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace.

## GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

"LET us then, my hearers, attempt this adventurous flight. Let us follow the path by which our blessed Savior ascended to heaven, and soar upward to the great capital of the universe, to the palace, and the throne of its greater King. As we rise, the earth fades away from our view; now we leave worlds, and suns, and systems behind us. Now we reach the utmost limits of creation; now the last star disappears, and no ray of created light is seen. But a new light now begins to dawn and brighten upon us. It is the light of heaven, which pours in a flood of glory from its wide open gates, spreading continual meridian day, far and wide through the regions of ethereal space. Passing swiftly onward through this flood of day, the songs of heaven begin to burst upon your ears, and voices of celestial sweetness, yet loud as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, are heard exclaiming, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever. A moment more, and you have passed the gates; you are in the midst of the city, you are before the eternal throne, you are in the immediate presence of God, and all his glories are blazing around you like a consuming fire. Flesh and blood cannot support it; your bodies dissolve into their original dust, but your immortal souls remain, and

stand naked spirits before the great Father of spirits. Nor, in losing their tenements of clay, have they lost the powers of perception. No; they are now all eye, all ear, nor can you close the eyelids of the soul, shut out for a moment the dazzling, overpowering splendors, which surround you, and which appear like light condensed, like glory which may be felt. You see, indeed, no form or shape; and yet your whole souls perceive, with intuitive clearness and certainty, the immediate, awe-inspiring presence of Jehovah. You see no countenance; and yet you feel as if a countenance of awful majesty, in which all the perfections of divinity shone forth, were beaming upon you wherever you turn. You see no eye; and yet a piercing, heart-searching eye, an eye of omniscient purity, every glance of which goes through your souls like a flash of lightning, seems to look upon you from every point of surrounding space. You feel as if enveloped in an atmosphere, or plunged in an ocean of existence, intelligence, perfection, and glory; an ocean, of which your laboring minds can take in only a drop; an ocean, the depth of which you cannot fathom, and the breadth of which you can never fully explore. But while you feel utterly unable to comprehend this infinite Being, your views of him, so far as they extend, are perfectly clear and distinct. You have the most vivid perceptions, the most deeply graven impressions, of an infinite, eternal, spotless mind, in which the images of all things, past, present, and to come, are most harmoniously seen, arranged in the most perfect order, and defined with the nicest accuracy: of a mind, which wills with infinite ease, but whose volitions are attended by a power omnipotent and irresistible, and which sows worlds, suns and systems through the fields of space, and with far more facility, than the husbandman scatters his seed upon the earth;—of a mind, whence have flowed all the streams, which ever watered any part of the universe with life, intelligence, holiness, or happiness, and which is still full, overflowing and inexhaustible. You perceive also, with equal clearness and certainty, that this infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise, all-creating mind is perfectly and essentially holy, a pure flame of holiness, and that, as such, he regards sin with unutterable, irreconcilable detestation and abhorrence. With a voice, which reverberates through the wide expanse of his dominions, you hear him saying, as the Sovereign and Legislator of the universe, Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy. And you see his throne surrounded, you see heaven filled by those only, who perfectly obey this command. You see thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of angels and archangels, pure, exalted, glorious intelligences, who reflect his perfect image, burn like flames of fire with zeal for his glory, and seem to be so many concentrations of wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and love; a fit retinue for the thrice holy Lord of hosts, whose holiness and all-filling glory they unceasingly proclaim.”—*Dr. Payson.*